The Black Cat

November. 1896.

Silas F. Quigley — To Arrive.
Lewis Hopkins Rogers.

The Polar Magnet.
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Fitzhugh.
W. Macpherson Wiltbank.

The Passionate Snake.
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The Black Cat

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Silas F. Quigley—To Arrive.

BY LEWIS HOPKINS ROGERS.

THE register was headed at the top of the page "March 27, 1881." There were fifteen or twenty names on the page, and I took a certain delight in writing, in a flowing business hand,

"S. F. Quigley, Oxford, Ohio."

The city was New York, and the hotel the Colonnade, a modest hotel on the European plan, — Broadway, near Eighth Street. I had never been east of Ohio before and everything was of the utmost interest. Two or three gentlemen who preceded me asked the clerk for mail after registering. One man, whose name was Roberts, turned to the clerk and remarked simply, "R's, please." At this the clerk handed him a bunch of mail, which, considering the number of letters it contained, stamped him at once in my mind as being a very important individual. He looked over the entire bunch, however, and then handed them all to the clerk, who put them back into the pigeon hole marked "R." The next man said, "A's, please." This man's fortune was about the same, with the exception that he secured a letter unsealed, with a one-cent stamp, which he threw unopened into the waste basket. The clerk then turned to me

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expectantly, and, with an effort to appear at ease, I stammered, "Q's, please." I no more expected to receive a letter than I had expected the mayor of New York to meet me at the depot. I did not know a soul in New York City, and no one in Oxford knew that I intended to stop at the Colonnade. In fact, I had never heard of the Colonnade until, two days before, while riding in the smoking apartment of a Pullman sleeper between Pittsburg and Philadelphia, a young man with whom I struck up a talking acquaintance, and who seemed to be familiar with New York, mentioned this hotel to me as a quiet central location for a stranger. I remembered telling this young man — whose name I had forgotten — that I would act on his suggestion. I had stopped in Philadelphia a day or so, while my train acquaintance went on directly to New York. As this young man was the only living being who could possibly guess my New York address, my inquiry was a mere matter of form. To continue the matter of form,— for "R, please," and "A, please," were now both watching me as I had watched them, — I carelessly picked up the solitary piece of mail matter that the clerk tossed me, — it was in the shape of a large blue business envelope, — and read the address: —

"Mr. Silas F. Quigley,
Hotel Colonnade,
"To Arrive. City."

In the upper left-hand corner of the envelope was the stamp of one of the largest magazine publishing houses in the United States. The address was typewritten and very plain. After scanning the letter as long as I could under the glances which I felt were fastened on me, I handed the letter back, saying, "There must be some mistake." The clerk took the letter and after examining it said, "Then your first name is not Silas?"

"Yes," I replied, "my first name is Silas."

"Then what more do you want?" said he, as he tossed the letter back to me. "That's the first time in a year we have had

a letter in the 'Q' box. The address, as you admit, is yours, first name and all; how can there be a mistake? We have never had any one stop here by that name before." All of which seemed so unanswerable that finally I put the letter in my pocket unopened and asked to be shown to my room. I was determined that when I opened that letter and drew forth conclusive proof that its contents were not intended for me I should be alone.

Once in my room, with the door locked, feeling something like a sneak thief, I cut open the envelope at the end and drew forth the following letter, written in a scrawling, hurried hand, with a lead pencil: —

"*Dear Sil:* — Glad you are coming to New York. Must have story from you — about three thousand words — by the 15th next. Enclosed find check for fifty dollars payable to bearer, as you are probably known only by your *nom de plume* in New York. Will send the other hundred upon receipt of story. Run in to see me.

"Faithfully,

"E."

With this short, business-like letter was a check for fifty dollars, payable to Silas F. Quigley, or bearer, properly made out and signed by the treasurer of the publishing house. I read the letter over a number of times, examined the check, and began to think. What a lucky dog this other Silas F. Quigley — To Arrive — was, anyway! One hundred and fifty dollars for three thousand words, five cents a word for a story. Who wouldn't try, at that rate? It could be finished in three hours, writing only at the rate of sixteen and two thirds words a minute. The words comprising the English language were free for every one. No one man could obtain a patent on the arrangement of phrases or construction of sentences. This man, this other Silas F. Quigley — To Arrive — could probably write a dozen stories of three thousand words each in a month and he could then make — it was simply too much to contemplate, too good to think about.

I kept the letter and check for about an hour, and then, feeling

that I had done something wrong, replaced them in the blue envelope, stuck the cut ends together with mucilage carefully, and wrote on the outside: "Opened by Silas F. Quigley, of Oxford, Ohio, by mistake." Then I handed it to the clerk saying, "This letter is intended for some other Silas F. Quigley, who will probably arrive in a day or two — probably to-day."

The clerk looked rather disappointed as he put the letter back in the "Q" box, simply remarking, "That's mighty funny."

Upon returning to the hotel that evening from an afternoon in Central Park, I could not help noticing the blue envelope silently waiting for the proper Silas F. Quigley — To Arrive. As I felt I ought to say something to the clerk I asked, "Has the other Mr. Quigley arrived yet?"

"No, and I don't expect him," said he, emphasizing his remarks, I thought, a little more than was absolutely necessary. "I never expect to see two men of that name."

As I well knew that hotel clerks were up on names, this appeared to be an unanswerable argument. I felt, however, that I could safely bide my time to regain the respect of that clerk, as I surely would do when the lucky Quigley should put in an appearance.

Alone in my room again I began to plan my future movements. I had passed creditably through a Western college — had spent five years in a business house in Cincinnati, and had come to New York with a desire to enlarge my opportunities. I had saved a little money and had an eminent faith in my own ability to get along in New York, though I was utterly devoid of any plans for the future. Entirely without friends in the East, I began for the first time to realize what a mighty city this New York was, and how utterly lost I seemed to be in it. If I had not been a man, twenty-four years old, I think I should have been homesick. But men never get homesick; only women and children do that. The nerve centers of a man must be located in a different place from those of women and children; his tear wells must be deeper and harder to reach; his bumps of affection and dependence must be less developed, for he is expected to be dignified and manly under all circumstances.

I had one little ray of hope — that blue envelope. Oh, to

be that Silas F. Quigley! — to be called "Dear Sil," — to have sent to me a fifty-dollar check with another hundred to come; and then to think of the exhilarating experience of seeing the story over my own *nom de plume*. How I longed to go down to the office and get that envelope out of the "Q" box again and examine it! But then what would that clerk say to me if I should ask for it again. I shivered as I thought of it and came to the conclusion that I was afraid of that clerk. Even after I went to bed the thought of him weighed on me. In my dreams that night "E," the hotel clerk, and Silas F. Quigley — To Arrive — became mixed up in a quarrel, and the night clerk came out on top, of course. It required some little time after I awoke, to get matters clear in my mind, but a brisk walk down Broadway to the Battery cheered me and caused me to forget for a time everything connected with the blue envelope. I visited several business houses, hoping to find some employment; but as soon as the person to whom I applied learned my errand, he suddenly lost all interest in me and became unaware of my presence.

At one large wholesale house I managed, by befogging the clerks as to the nature of my business, to penetrate to the head of the firm.

"What can I do for you, sir?" asked the man of millions.

"I want employment," said I boldly.

"So do forty thousand other young men in New York City," said he, taking off his eye glasses and looking at me with an air which said: —

"That answer never fails to do the work."

After a few remarks, all of which tended towards shortening the interview, I backed out, and started up Broadway towards my hotel, with a great weight on my chest. To think of an army of forty thousand men hunting for employment was overwhelming. What chance did I stand among such a number? I walked fast and kept busy glancing at sights in the windows — for tear wells in a man should be very, very deep. As I entered the hotel and walked by the office to my room, I saw that the blue envelope was still in the "Q" box. A feeling of envy and resentment began to take possession of me. Who was this Silas F. Quigley — To Arrive? Why did he not arrive and put an end to the

comedy, anyway? There was a position and an income thrown at a man possessing my identical name, and he, in all probability, was too much occupied writing stories elsewhere, to come and secure his mail. It was simply too irritating for contemplation. Who was "E," anyway? How affectionately he wrote "Dear Sil". I could have hugged him, even if I were not the "Sil" he had "deared." Then there suggested itself to me a deed so desperate that it made the cold perspiration stand out on my forehead. Why not impersonate the Silas F. Quigley — To Arrive — so long as he did not arrive; write the story, get the hundred dollars, and, in short, make my living as an author? To falsely represent myself as another man and step into his shoes seemed an enormous crime, and yet if I could write a story good enough to secure the compensation, I should have stolen nothing but his chance to do something! I determined to try and the determination brought with it an exhilaration I had not experienced since my arrival.

I went out immediately to a corner shop and bought a dozen paper pads containing one hundred sheets each of clean white writing paper. As I passed the hotel office a terrible fear seized me that the other Silas F. Quigley had arrived. I fully realized that the instant he should put in an appearance, that instant all efforts that I should have made would fall to the ground. I sat down to the table with a new, fresh pad in front of me, dipped my pen in the ink, repeating to myself the formula, "Sixteen and two thirds words per minute for three hours equals one hundred and fifty dollars." I dipped my pen in the ink for the next ten or fifteen minutes, then repeated, "Sixteen and two thirds words per minute for three hours equals one hundred and fifty dollars." I sat for some little time looking blankly at the paper. How white it was, and how much there was of it! The room seemed to be getting hot. I arose and opened a window and then sat down to the table again. It seemed as though I should never stop dipping that pen into the ink. The open window made the room too cold, and I shut it. I walked the floor for awhile, and every time I passed the table the pad of white paper seemed to stare at me, so I turned it face downwards. I began my sixteen and two thirds words per minute at 7.30 in the evening and at 3 A. M. I had half of one page covered with writing which I tore into a

thousand pieces, when I read it the next morning. That day was a frightful one. The feat of writing a story had always appeared to me an easy matter. All that I had read seemed to flow along at a given speed, without in the least suggesting any trouble, care, work, or perplexity on the part of their authors. At the end of that day I had only a page of chapter headings, — I had determined to have six chapters of five hundred words each,— which on examination the next morning seemed so silly that I destroyed it. I glanced down at the pile of pads, twelve, containing one hundred sheets each,— and the enormity of my self-appointed task began to dawn on me. Where was that other Silas F. Quigley? I remembered then that the day before, I had made up my mind that the only thing which could prevent my success would be the appearance of that man claiming his blue envelope; now I sincerely hoped he would put in an appearance, the sooner the better. I remembered that I had thought of the situation as a queer race between two Silas F. Quigleys; one racing with his brain, the other with his legs. Legs had won before he had started. I grabbed my hat and coat and went hurriedly to the street. The clerk gave me a pitying glance as I passed him, and the thought occurred to me that he was the author of all my trouble, that he had written that letter simply to mystify me and send me to the asylum. Out in the cool air I walked for miles, finally reaching a secluded spot on the banks of the majestic Hudson away up above One Hundred and Fortieth Street. How serene and calm everything was there! What a noble river! How quiet the hills! Could it be possible that so near such a hive of human industry, such a fight for existence, there was such rest as this?

"O hills!" cried I, "who is the author of your serenity?"

. . . . . .

I gave it up. Silas F. Quigley could arrive or not, just as he pleased. I had no further interest in him. I even spoke pleasantly to the clerk, and after a few days made him a present of twelve pads of white paper, one hundred sheets each, with the exception of one pad which was two sheets short.

"A little surplus writing paper," I said, as I handed it to him, "for which I have no use."

"You're not one of these literary fellers, are you?" said he, as he looked at the pile with astonishment.

"No? Well, I was goin' to say if you were you'd never amount to anything. They come here from all over the country expectin' to make their fortune by writin', but I have never seen one of 'em do it; they all flunk." Then he put the paper under an old desk.

"What do they do — after — they — flunk?" asked I, as carelessly as possible.

"Oh, some of 'em get positions as porters and janitors, some drive horse cars, and others shoot themselves up in Central Park."

"Do any of them ever go to clerking in hotels?" said I. In answer to this I received only a hard stare which told me plainly that the interview was at an end.

I returned to my former occupation of hunting a position. I progressed somewhat in this, inasmuch as I became accustomed to rebuffs and refusals. To be hopeful for the morrow was an accomplishment I found to be absolutely necessary if I was to become proficient in the art of hunting a position. Each morning as I started out, however, I noticed that I was less hopeful than the day before. I observed a settled look about my mouth, and then I happened to remember that I had not laughed once since I landed in New York. I thought it was my duty to laugh some, so I thought of all the funny things I ever read or heard. They seemed now like ghost stories. In trying to smile I felt as though some gigantic evil genius in the shape of a spirit photographer was taking a picture of my soul, while saying all the time, "Look pleasant now, look pleasant."

On the evening of the 12th of April, as I passed by the office on the way to my room, the clerk tossed me out a letter addressed to "Silas F. Quigley, Hotel Colonnade, City." It was another blue envelope from the same publishing house. I knew as well as I knew that I was alive that the letter was for the other Silas F. Quigley. Yet the temptation was too strong. I was starving for a kind word from some one, and I would have it even if I stole it.

I carried the letter to my room, locked the door, pulled down the shades and read: —

"4-12, '81.

"*Dear Sil:* — Have not heard a word since sending you fifty, two weeks ago. Story must reach me by evening of 15th. *Must have it.* Don't fail me.

"Yours, E."

I stared at this letter a long time, during which I must have devoured each word a hundred times. Some things can be so funny that they get far beyond the laughing point and become serious again. This was one of them. I was starving for kind words and employment. Here was some one ready to give both, and begging me, or some one with my name, to take them. Still I could not go to "E" — whoever he was — and tell him. That would be the surest way of not getting them. Silas F. Quigley — To Arrive — seemed to be dead or a myth. I was ready to believe the clerk had killed him, simply to prove to me that the first blue letter belonged to me; — clerks are so conceited, and never wrong. Then what would the clerk think of me having accepted the second blue letter from the publishing house, while I had returned the first? I seemed to be aging. It was surely ten years since I had landed in New York. Ten years without laughing — that in itself was enough to laugh at. A tragedy and comedy rolled into one was being enacted. I was heavy man, low comedian, villain, and spectator. I received my cues from two other actors, but they could never come on the stage, for as soon as they did that, as soon as I should meet either one, then the play would stop. They would never even know there had been a play going on.

The letter before me was a kind invitation to try again to be wicked. I had tried hard once and utterly failed. To think of all that white paper was maddening. I thought of a new formula: "Sixteen and two thirds words per minute for three hours = $1,500,000." This seemed more like the proper equation, but just as difficult to reduce. I imagined myself a worm on the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, with a heavy iron weight gradually coming down over me. Those who were guiding the weight, many fathoms above, could have no knowledge of me or my position, yet, no matter how much I might twist or squirm, their aim

seemed to be unerring. If I escaped the weight I escaped only into the ocean where a million other weights and dangers would surround me. The great, ominous-looking weight was the story of three thousand words, and the ocean, New York.

Such was the state of my mind on the evening of the 12th of April. Yet on the morning of the 15th the deed was done. Three thousand words — just three thousand — no more, no less, had been written, sealed up in an envelope, and addressed to the publishing house which seemed to want them so much. What I passed through between the 12th and 15th no one will ever know.

I determined, gave up, wrote a few pages, destroyed them; wrote again, read it out loud, learned it by heart, sang it, and then destroyed all evidences of my efforts. Again I started, and again went through the same program. Finally I wound up on the banks of the Hudson, where it was absolutely quiet. It was surprising how restful this view became to me. I took the memory of that scenery back with me to my room, and wrote steadily for half an hour. Whenever I began to think of my immediate surroundings I became restless, and nothing would set my pen at work again except a visit to the Hudson. When I had finished I had about thirty-six hundred words, which I cut down to three thousand. After I started, the fear that Silas F. Quigley would put in an appearance before the 15th did its full share in keeping up the nervous tension I was under.

The question of *nom de plume* and handwriting bothered me for a long time. I was naturally a good penman, but knowing that literary men never are, I carefully copied the story in a small, cramped, schoolboy hand, using a finger movement that gave me an actual cramp in my right hand. When at last it was completed I signed it only with the *nom de plume* "Cid." Then I folded the precious leaves carefully, placed them in an envelope, and in the same handwriting wrote the following note: —

"MESSRS. ——— 4-15, '81.
New York.

"*Gentlemen:* — According to instructions received by me from your house, signed "E," I enclose herewith a story of three thousand words. I prefer from this time on to use the *nom de plume*

'Cid.' Any further instructions from you will receive prompt consideration. "Very truly yours,

"SILAS F. QUIGLEY."

When I dropped the packet in the letter box on the corner I turned hot and then cold. It was only by going to my nook on the Hudson that I could feel at all like myself.

I waited three days — the longest three days I ever spent — and then came another blue envelope, which I felt belonged really to me. The letter read: —

"4-18, '81.

"*Dear Sil.*: — Yours at hand. What's the matter? Are you sick? The story is all right, but the writing looks as though you had fever and ague. You'll have to practise and get back into that flowing business-like hand you used to write so nicely. Why in the world are you writing under another *nom de plume?*

"Give me another story, about five thousand words — this week if you can; if not, *next week sure*. Your hundred has been placed to your credit on our books; run in and get it, and let me see you at the same time.

"Faithfully, E."

"P. S. Give me your reason for using another *nom*. It ought to be a good one — the reason, I mean. Stella sends regards. I read your story to her last night. E."

After reading this letter, my feelings became what the novelist would probably term "mingled." I had taken such intense pains to reduce my handwriting from a flowing business hand to — this point surely was ludicrous and I burst out laughing.

The next point was not so funny. I had one hundred dollars to my credit on the books of this large publishing house which had never heard of me, and although I had earned it, it was not rightfully mine, nor could I get it in any manner. If I confronted "E" he would not know me and the story would probably cease to be interesting to him. If I did not disclose myself, what were

to be my future plans? At any moment the rightful Silas F. Quigley might appear, and I would then drop back into oblivion as quietly as a pebble would sink if dropped into the Atlantic Ocean. The great overwhelming fact, however, was that another story was wanted; this time five thousand words.

Was I to continue my career of crime and deception, especially as it was not bringing me in anything? Was it within the range of possibilities for me to write another story at all? In writing the first I had exhausted all the imagination, all the ideas, all the plots, situations, and schemes I could think of. My mind was a blank — on stories. But I could scarcely find time to eat or sleep so busy was I with — I was about to say *my* affairs; still I was no less busy because the affairs were really those of Silas F. Quigley — To Arrive. I was busy straightening out a tangle of threads with a hundred ends and none of them the right one. I was trying to solve a puzzle to which there was no solution.

And then Stella! who was she? Were there to be a woman and a love story mixed up in the tangle? Already I loved Stella as much as a man could love a woman without ever having seen her. I longed to throttle this other Silas F. Quigley, who seemed to have all the good things a young man appreciates flung at him. Still, if only the other man stayed away long enough and I could surreptitiously hold my end up as a story writer, which I did not believe possible, it was barely probable that some time in the future I could burst in upon "E" and receive recognition. He would surely listen to me and the recounting of my trials would be interesting to him. And then I might possibly, after that, secure a position with the publishing house, not as a story writer — never that — but in some other capacity within my range.

For the first time, therefore, I began to formulate a definite plan. I would be a conspirator — a villain, probably, — and the other Silas F. Quigley would be the long-lost hero, liable to appear on the scene at any moment and entirely upset my plans. I would try, as I never had tried to do anything before, to write all the stories required. I would send messages to Stella, write notes to "E" (with a rapidly improving penmanship) and so draw these unconscious victims into my net, that when disclosure came, as it surely would, they could not easily disentangle

themselves. I would try to be so very wicked and withal so captivating that when I should be incarcerated the men would pity and the women bring me flowers. "E" and Stella were doomed. I was the leader now, not they. Some one else should try to solve riddles — I was through.

So I began to write with something of a lighter heart within me, thinking that at the worst I should be in no worse fix than without this farce which I seemed to be playing. If Silas F. Quigley should appear, his original letter and the fifty dollars would still be waiting for him in the "Q" box, and probably more would be to his credit at the publishing house. At all events, things seemed to brighten for me, although I could not explain why. It seemed to me that if one could only imagine some one else was taking an interest in one, it would go far towards making that one happy.

How I wrote the story of five thousand words I do not know. For an imagination, I simply had to imagine I had one. On the whole, though, when it was finished it seemed better than the first. To be sure, on reading it over, some of the parts which I had intended should be funny appealed to me as quite serious, and *vice versa*. Still I consoled myself by the theory that a doctor is never a good doctor for himself, and hoped that "E" had better judgment than I.

With the story I sent the following note: —

"*Dear E:* — Yours at hand. My handwriting *was* somewhat cramped last time, but if you had known how badly my hand pained me you would have excused it. It does not hurt so badly now and I think you will notice some improvement. I will, I hope, soon get back into 'that business style' when the pain leaves me.

"Enclosed find story which I dashed off hurriedly. I have so much writing to do that I think perhaps I did not give it the time I should; if you care to, you can destroy it, and I will send you another.

"I met Charley the other day and he is not well. Asked about you particularly. I could hardly give him any satisfaction, being so busy

"Regarding *nom de plume* 'Cid,' I have reasons of my own for adopting it.

"Love to Stella.

"Yours truly,

"SILAS F. QUIGLEY."

I folded this up with something of a wicked smile, thinking: — "If that doesn't mix him up, I don't know what will."

No sooner was this posted than I concluded I had overdone the matter, and that the letter was not only foolish but would result in exposing me. I did not imagine it was possible to arrive at so many different conclusions regarding the same thing as I did regarding the effect of my letter. What was the use of attempting to arrive at any conclusion, anyway? I was in the hands of Fate, and I could not help wishing that Fate were Stella. I placed her far above all young ladies I had ever met. Sure that I should never meet her, I placed her on a little throne and prepared to worship her, — some beautiful star away up in the firmament, that I might only look upon. When I remembered that I had dared to send her my love I became frightened; and yet, surely, any one might throw a kiss at a star.

During the next few days I spent most of my time in my nook on the Hudson, where the water appeared to flow so peacefully and where the calm hills seemed to speak.

On the fifth day I received the following letter: —

"*Dear Sil*:—Yours received. Glad to hear from you and to learn your hand is getting better. It must be, for your writing is much improved. I read your new story to Stella last evening, and she was as much interested in it as I. There are a number of passages in it which might be improved, and there are some which show a depth of nature — the author's most precious gift — too rich in possibilities, to allow to remain unused. You should write more. I write simply as a friend and not to criticize. Charley met me after he had seen you and told me about your conversation.

"I have placed another hundred and fifty dollars to your

credit, and am wondering why you don't run in to see me. I am a very busy man, but I will always find time to see you.

"Faithfully, E."

"P. S. Give me another story; say twenty-five hundred words."

This letter dazed me somewhat. My first conclusion was that "E" was a hard man to mix; my next, that he was so badly mixed he didn't know it himself; my next, that "E" and the other Silas F. Quigley had a common friend named "Charley," and that I had stumbled on the name! I had summoned a spirit and he had stepped forth flesh and blood. But then Stella was interested in my stories, so what did I care if everything else was upside down and inside out? Henceforth, I would write for her and her alone. I would write a love story and use the name "Bella" for my heroine. Bella at first should be an ideal person and everything that was lovely. She should be worshiped by the hero at a great distance, but gradually the two should gravitate towards each other until they should meet. When they met, then Bella the ideal should become Bella the real. The hero should marry Bella. This attempt to make myself known reminded me of attempts to notify the inhabitants of Mars that we were on earth, but I concluded to try it.

So I went to work on my first love story, which I wrote at one sitting, and sent it in with this letter: —

"*Dear E:* — Yours received. I am more than grateful to you for any suggestions or criticisms you may have to offer. You are much older than I, and I am thankful to have such a gifted critic. Enclosed find a little story inspired to some extent by the interest which Stella, the dear girl, has manifested in my stories, as reported by you.

"Mr. Schnellenheimer is not doing anything now and would like to get work. Have you anything for him to do? As you know, he is a printer by trade and he could probably be useful to you. Poor fellow, his family needs it, too.

"Truly yours,

"SILAS F. QUIGLEY."

I was getting desperate. I was in love with an ideal woman who was reading my letters and stories, but to whom I never could expect to be introduced. I was desperate in that I should be so completely balked by "E" when I attempted to mystify him and gradually win him away from his other love — the other Silas F. Quigley. I had determined on pushing matters. Therefore, I had constructed such a letter as should bring, logically, a reply something like this: —

"SILAS F. QUIGLEY, ESQ.

"*Dear Sir:* — Who are you and what do you mean by sending such messages to my niece? I have never heard of Schnellenheimer and don't care to. A personal explanation is due from you! Your love story is returned herewith!

"Yours,

"EDWARD EVERETT EGGLESTONE."

Upon receipt of this letter I could understand matters, and my course of action would be plain. I would give a long, hearty, hollow laugh, then tear the returned love story and Edward Everett Egglestone's letter into a thousand pieces, pack my bag, go down and bid the clerk good-by, take one last look at the original blue envelope, smile as amusedly as I could, as I should think of the beautiful tangle I had prepared for Silas F. Quigley — To Arrive — take up my abode somewhere else in New York, and begin life, the old humdrum, commonplace life, over again. Yes, I had settled the matter at last. I had written a love story which "E" and Stella, if they had any brains at all, could not mistake. They would see that the writer was a lovelorn fool unworthy any further attention.

I studied some time to secure a name for my new character which would not fit any being on earth. Mr. Schnellenheimer should not be disposed of as easily as "Charley" had been. There might be a million "Charleys," but there could be only one Schnellenheimer.

After mailing the love story and letter I gathered together all my effects and prepared to depart. Packing is melancholy work at best, and I would leave none of it to be done after receiving

the letter, though it might be days hence. My only relief was in thinking of the next meeting between "E" and Silas F. Quigley — To Arrive. How innocent he would be, and yet how good an actor in the eyes of "E." How I enjoyed transferring the perplexing situation to another member of the Quigley family! The drama or farce was never ending. The new actor would be as powerless to ascertain what his predecessor had done as his predecessor had been to know what the new actor would do.

The fatal blue envelope was finally delivered to me by the clerk, who made matters more interesting by asking me if I was ever going to take that other blue letter out of the "Q" box.

Alone in my room, with my top coat on my arm, hat on the table, and bag at my side, I opened and read the following letter:—

"*Dear Sil:* — Yours at hand. The love story is fine, and Stella was more than interested. She remarked that this was the first time she had ever read one of your love stories, although you seemed to have written like an old, experienced hand. By the way, your hand must be well, judging from your writing. You surely did not suppose that I had forgotten Schnellenheimer? Who would ever forget a man with a name like that? I am sorry he is still without work. Send him down, and I will see what I can do for him. I want you to go out to my house to dinner to-morrow night. Don't fail. Come to the office and go out with me. Faithfully,

"E."

I read this over three times, rubbed my hand over my eyes to be sure I was awake, took my hat and coat, and started out hurriedly. My steps were toward the Battery, and my destination was the office of the publishing house. I never stopped to think; the time for thinking had passed.

"Is there a gentleman here who signs 'E' to his letters?" I asked of a good-looking clerk in the editorial rooms.

"Yes, sir," he replied; "you want to see Mr. Ellicott, the managing editor, I suppose."

"Please hand him this card," said I.

"Silas F. Quigley," read a pleasant-looking man, of about

forty-five, in an inner office, looking at the card. "Show him right in," said he, with something of a twinkle in his eye.

I was ushered into a nice, inviting-looking apartment, with thick rugs on the floor, and easy-chairs around the room. As the boy passed out, the door swung to noiselessly, and I stood face to face with the man whom I had never expected to see.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Quigley," said Mr. Ellicott, in a pleasant voice, rising from his chair and taking me by the hand.

"Glad to see *me?*" said I, shaking from head to foot.

"Certainly," said he; "have a chair."

"How did you know my name was Quigley?" I asked, without having moved.

"You sent in your card," said he.

"Oh, yes! Certainly — of course," replied I, rather foolishly. "Mr. Ellicott, I will not deceive you any longer, and before I sit down in your office I want to inform you that I am *not* the Silas F. Quigley you know."

"I do not know any one else of that name," said he quietly.

"Mr. Ellicott, please believe me when I tell you that I have been acting wrongly in deceiving you; but I seemed drawn into it, and you did not seem to know that it was *I*, Silas F. Quigley, an entire stranger to you, and *not* the author, Silas F. Quigley, with whom you have been corresponding. *I* wrote those silly stories. *I* sent those messages to Stella. *I, Silas F. Quigley, of Oxford, Ohio*, impersonated Silas F. Quigley — To Arrive — the author to whom you first wrote and sent fifty dollars in a letter which is still waiting for him at the Colonnade. *I*" —

"Tut, tut, young man," he said, with a kindly smile, "don't be so fast. You must remember that a criminal is not compelled to give evidence which will incriminate him."

Upon which Mr. Ellicott turned to his desk and began doing some writing, while I sank helplessly into a large chair and sat there looking at him, more perplexed than ever and no nearer knowing the truth. After quite a few minutes, he turned in his office chair, leaned back, and said slowly: —

"Mr. Quigley, if you will listen to me a little while I think I can set you straight, for you seem to be considerably mixed. And no wonder!" I remembered afterwards that he added

this with a chuckle, though I was too engrossed in the main issue then to notice chuckles.

I am afraid that my eyes were bulging and my mouth was open, waiting for what he had to say.

"Yes," he began again. "I think I can straighten you out. At twenty-seven years of age I married one of the best girls in the world. She was what might be called a practical girl. She was always devising some new and ingenious plan of helping people along without their knowing it. She let others sew and gossip at the sewing societies while she would put into operation some plan — roundabout in its operation, but direct in its beneficial results — which would do as much for the poor of the community as a dozen sewing societies would do in the name of Charity.

She is an inventor, pure and simple; and if her efforts should be directed towards financiering or military campaigns, she would surpass any man I ever knew. I had no idea of this when I married her, but found her out gradually.

"One of her best efforts is called the 'Ellicott Notification Society.' It has one president and several thousand vice-presidents. She is president, and every member is a vice-president. There is a vice-president in every city, town, and village of any size, in the United States. The duties of president and vice-presidents are similar and easy to perform. In perfecting this organization Mrs. Ellicott secured through some source the name of some worthy lady in each city or town, and sent her a printed circular outlining the object of the organization, asking her to respond stating whether or not she would become a member. In almost every instance she received favorable responses, and a list of the vice-presidents was then printed and sent to each one, together with the printed obligation which each one had agreed to undertake. Everything was done in the most methodical manner, all names being placed in alphabetical order in a large index. The name of the society, as I have told you, is 'The Ellicott Notification Society.' Its object is for each member to do everything in her power for young men who may come to the town or city in which she lives, from some other city or town. Each member is also obligated to notify another member of

the name, address — if possible — and character of the young man who is about to depart to another place.

"Some time ago Mrs. Ellicott received one of the printed blanks like this one"; — and turning to his desk, he took from a pigeon-hole a slip which read as follows: —

THE ELLICOTT NOTIFICATION SOCIETY.

.....18

NAME (give name in full).....

ADDRESS (last permanent address).....

CHARACTER (as you know it to be).....

HABITS (good or bad).....

EASILY LED (yes or no).....

RELIGION (if any).....

WHEN START (exact date).....

DESTINATION (ultimate).....

ADDRESS (specific).....

REMARKS .....

Vice-Pres.....

This blank he handed me for inspection, and I stared at it without gathering for a moment what it all meant. When I had looked it over he continued: —

"This special blank which I remarked Mrs. Ellicott received some time ago, was dated at Oxford, Ohio, and had on it the name of 'Silas F. Quigley.' What further particulars there were about you I cannot say, but you seemed to be — "

"Hold a minute," said I, all eagerness; "this lady, whoever she might have been, this vice-president living at Oxford, could not in any way have known my stopping place in New York City, for I did not know it myself until — "

"Until my son directed you to it, for it was by a peculiar coincidence that you met my son on the train between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia and wrote your name for him on a card. That's how we knew your first writing was bogus.

"To go back a little," he continued, "when Mrs. Ellicott was notified that a worthy young man was coming to New York for the first time to get work, she set to work to devise some means to help him. When George — that's my son — came home from the West and showed us your card, my wife seemed perfectly delighted. She formed a plan at once to have waiting for you at your hotel a letter, which, of course, you would not understand and which you would assume at once was intended for some one else of the same name. The letter was to suggest remunerative work of some kind, and was to contain a certain sum of money. When she had explained the plan to me, I thought highly of it until she came to the money part, and then I entered a formal objection. She always wins, however, in an argument. She said you would never touch it as long as you believed it was not yours, as she had you rated pretty well up in her rating book, which she makes up from the notification slips received. Then she sketched out my work for me — for by special permission of all the V. P.'s I have been elected treasurer of the society. I was to copy in my own business style the letters which she should dictate, offer you good round sums for stories, furnish the first fifty dollars, and perform other minor duties usual to a treasurer.

So a letter dictated by Mrs. Ellicott was sent to the Colonnade addressed to "Silas F. Quigley, — To Arrive" —

"I remember it," said I, gasping faintly.

"Its effect was just as Mrs. Ellicott had imagined, and her prophecies regarding your actions have been verified almost to the letter.

You see there are thousands and thousands of ways in this city by which a young man can get started down hill, especially when he gets discouraged at not finding work and has no friends to confide in. Mrs. Ellicott's idea has always been that if a young man can be kept busy thinking about something which to him is everything, and eventually finds work, his chances are better for passing safely through the period of depression which comes to every young man who comes alone to New York to find work. I should judge that you have not had much time to slide down hill?"

He needed only to glance at me to get a satisfactory answer.

"I have been busy," said I simply, scarcely knowing where I was.

"While you have been hard at work we have been amused at some of the correspondence," he continued, with a merry twinkle in his eye, "and yet your stories are good enough to publish, and I guess we can find a place for you on the editorial staff of the magazine."

"Who is Charley?" I said, determined to clear everything up.

"What Charley?" said he.

"The Charley you mentioned in your letter," I replied.

"The same Charley you mentioned in yours," said he, with something of a grin on his face.

"And Schnellenheimer," I asked earnestly, "did you ever know a man by that name?"

"Never," said he, rather sternly, so much so, indeed, that both question and answer seemed to rebound on me.

"And Stella?" questioned I eagerly.

"Stella is my wife; you will meet her at dinner to-morrow night."

The Polar Magnet.

BY PHILIP VERRILL MIGHELS.

A FEW weeks ago two artist friends and I were permitted to have a private view of the paintings, marbles, and bronzes of a wealthy French gentleman living in New York, in an old-time mansion, on an old-time street. His name I purposely withhold.

Whisperings of marvelous art treasures to be seen in his sanctuary we had heard, but so sacredly does he guard the place against intrusion and guests generally that we had about given up hope of walking within the mysterious precincts. It was Hunter — an artist chum of mine that caught the old gentleman's attention with a clever bit of plaster — who pronounced the open sesame for the trio of us.

And a truly remarkable place it was, indeed. I should tell too long a story did I describe, half adequately, the rich oils and water-colors, the matchless nudes and draped figures in spotless white stone, and the superb bronzes, all set in such surroundings as to fairly inspire them with being.

It was in the innermost holy of holies that we finally stood spellbound. There, poised with a balance truly exquisite, on the peak of an iceberg, was the bronze figure of a woman, delicately draped, and vibrating with all the subtle intensity of reality. The arms were extended, the head thrown coyly back, the lips pursed to a positive invitation to a kiss,— the whole thing irresistible in its fascinating and enchanting power to draw one humbly to its feet. And the name of it was The Polar Magnet.

Symbol of the strange and weird attraction to the steel of the magnetic needle, it shamed the mere affinity that lies betwixt the Northern loadstone and the metal, and drew one's very soul to a fearful brink.

Upon the instant of looking at it I felt a chill of dread go

down my entire line of nerves,— dread and ecstasy. A wondrous quivering of recollection was in me. Mechanically I stepped forward to assure myself, and then moved away, concealing my emotions as best I could, and sank helpless upon a divan.

The voices of my friends and our host came to me in awed whispers. After the first dumbing stroke of paralysis that the thing always occasioned in those who beheld it, Hunter and Edward went into perfectly insane raptures over the fleshiness of it, the pose, the life, the action, and the truly marvelous and unheard-of modeling.

"Why, monsieur," whispered Hunter, "who in the world ever did such a piece of work?"

"A sculptor who died in a very strange manner — committed suicide, so it was said — nobody ever knew. He was destined to become the sculptor of sculptors, had he lived, but no other work of his was ever found; very mysterious, very — the whole thing. His name was Carl Ho — "

"And no other — no other of his works anywhere?" I broke in. I had to say something — anything. I, I alone knew of the mystery of the strange artist; and the sight of this bronze, the very face of which I knew — as one knows the face of a dream entity — had made me nearly wild. I, I alone, I, who as a boy had carried clay, mixed plaster, and dried the molds for this very sculptor, knew the whole story, and was sick of the knowledge.

We came away at last — how I know not, for memory was working potently within me and upsetting everything else. Since then I have pondered the advisability of telling the story, and I think it is better out of me.

Too well do I remember the every detail of that out-of-the-way studio, in an old building, since torn down, that stood far over on the east side of Fifteenth Street. The workshop was large and well lighted. In one corner was the clay tank, oozy and grayish, and by it stood the barrel of plaster, both being near the low, deep sink, wherein were mixing pans and tools. The model throne was about in the middle of the place, and was also low. In the far end were two doors, opening to separate dressing-rooms, either of which could be reached from the hall, without passing through the other. Another door on the western side opened on

the den occupied by the artist as kitchen, dining-room, and boudoir. Strewn about, and standing about, and hung about, were casts, pieces of molds, dried clay, rude hunks of plaster, and bold, half-finished charcoal drawings. One or two small stands were surmounted by clay busts, in process of execution, and swaddled about with wet rags, to keep them damp, till they looked like heads and shoulders of condemned criminals on gallows traps.

My duties were various. I kept the dank busts and rags soaked; worked and rolled the clay; mixed the plaster till my hands calloused and cracked; did what cleaning up was ever done, and danced attendance in a very versatile and lively manner generally.

A fear of my master was always on me, — and small wonder. He was dark, thin, bedraggled, and horribly intense. His eyes were way in his head, as if some one had shoved them in with vigorous thumb pushes, and they gleamed with a fascinating blackness that held one smileless and cowed. He had a disagreeable way of bending over me, transfixing my gaze, and then putting such ambition into me that I was more energetic and dexterous to do his bidding than a steam-driven automaton could have been. He dazed and dizzied me until I should have fled in anxiety from him, had I dared to do so.

Into the studio customers hardly ever came. Models were there from time to time — though now I believe that none was ever paid for services — but he constantly growled at them for their utter lack of anatomical perfection; and he wrought furiously over them with his clay, in which he ever failed to reach what he sought. I may as well say right here that he was not a great sculptor, could never have been one, and rose only to a pot-boiler mediocrity in his work. Some few clever tricks he could do, and he had, unquestionably, a keen and artistic conception of original subjects for which he could design amazing groups or poses, but his cunning never so far extended as to reach the ball of his thumb. He had a diabolical knack of taking casts from living hands and arms and feet, however, that would have commanded admiration anywhere or at any time.

Where he ever got the model whom I mentally dubbed the "frozen poem," I never knew. She was not an ordinary model,

anyway; of that I felt assured. Up the stairs and into the place she followed him one afternoon, looking at nothing, seeing nothing, doing nothing but what he ordered.

I shall never forget the glimpse I had of her as she issued from the dressing-room and moved to the throne, which he had curtained off from my vulgar gaze. Draped only in a filmy delicacy that clung to her as a light snow clings to an unclothed rose-bush, she exhibited a roundness and statuesque symmetry truly astounding. Never, even in the ideal limbs, torsos, busts, necks, and arms, had I seen such startling, nearly impossible, beauty, such grace of contour, such dignity of bearing, such sinuous movement and poise of every tremulous atom. And even then I marveled, immature as my perceptions were, that she walked all unconscious of her appearance and with no pink blush overspreading the creamy surface of her face and breast, although the most hardened of the models usually betrayed the faint echoes of that token of modesty.

How she was posed behind the curtain I did not know, nor could I guess what my master did with all the material which passed under his deft and cat-quick hands. That he kept me jumping as never I had jumped before I do attest. Roll after roll of clay, pounded flat, he demanded; bucketful after bucketful of plaster, mixed thick, he ordered, and got, until my limbs ached beneath me, and I staggered faintly across the floor from the sink to the edge of the curtain.

The daylight went; the gas was lighted, and still I labored with mud and plaster, and still he wrought silently and mysteriously behind his screen. I saw only his nervous hands reaching forth to pull in the stuff which I placed near the curtain, until the hour was late; then his sweaty and distorted visage leered at me through an opening — and reminded me of snake stories, as I well remember — long enough for him to tell me to go home.

Feebly I went — and overslept myself the next morning.

When at last I appeared, he had cleaned the place of nearly every vestige and sign of the previous night's doings. This struck me as being odd, but I was more nonplussed to be given a two days' vacation — one of the compulsory kind. However, I will say that I was glad enough thereat.

In less than a week the artist had something akin to fame. Locally he was already lauded as the sculptor of the century. Breathings of a wonderful work by him came to my small ears, and his production was to be cast in bronze at once.

Visitors now came too frequently and numerously for any good. He was obliged to lock himself away on all but his days for receiving. It was a transformation time. I recall it hazily, and some details not at all.

It was early in this season of his sudden prosperity that my master toiled and made me toil, in vast preparation against some prodigious undertaking. A wonderful pedestal he made and placed upon the model throne; oiled draperies he fashioned, and a new barrel of plaster he purchased. For my part, I worked up all the clay in the tank, pounded up and remixed the old dried bits, and even pulled down the rag-swaddled mummy busts on the other stands, at his orders, and made everything into rolls and long, stiff, flat pieces of mud.

Again, late in the afternoon, as before, he led the way, and the beautiful woman model followed him up the stairs, to disappear in one of the dressing-rooms. He went out then, coming back in a very few moments, and leading the way for a tall, handsome, athletic-looking young man. This person walked blindly — as if the eyes of him that saw comprehended nothing. And he occupied the other dressing-room.

No curtains went up this day. Manifestly the labor was to be so great that the master could neither take the time to arrange for them nor afford to have them in the way. As for my presence, why, I was necessary, even as a machine might have been. Whether he intended to intimidate me into silence after the thing was all over, or whether he calculated that I would be too awe-stricken to breathe a word of it, I know not. Certain it is that he so impressed me that I never told what went forward in that place until now. And the thing thrills me with horror as I write it to-day.

Over the mixing pans and the clay as I was, I lost no detail of what he did. First, he jerked off his coat, vest, and white shirt and rolled his sleeves well up. This was after he had secured the doors against possible intruders. Then he opened the dressing-room doors and said some word to the occupant in each.

The woman, whose beauty seemed heightened by the slightly changed drapery in which she now issued from the place, came forth; so also did the man, each standing listlessly and unregardful of the other. The man was draped a trifle more than she was, and with rare artistic effect. He was simply superb, as a physical specimen. In the mind picture which I still retain of him, I can see the play of an hundred beautiful muscles, and I am charmed — enchanted, nearly — at the rhythmic vibrations of power and action in his arms, legs, and body. Because of the anatomical perfection of him, he was, to me, even more beautiful than was the woman — the "frozen poem."

On each the drapery was oiled — and, indeed, so were their entire persons. They must have anointed themselves most thoroughly in their dressing-rooms.

At a sign from the artist they moved automatically to the throne and stood facing him. He looked keenly into the eyes of each, as if to reassure himself, and wove strange weavings in the air before their faces with his hands. They tottered a little thereat and shut their eyes.

I could hear him whisper to them, now, in a half-fierce, incisive tone, which to understand was to fear and obey.

"You are in love with each other," he said, "and have just found it out and told of the fresh, beautiful, holy dawn of it."

I shuddered to hear him use the word "holy," but the action of the two models petrified my thought, riveted my glance, and thrilled the innermost heart-chords of me.

They sank into each other's embrace with a gesture so simple, so chaste, so refined, poetic, wonderful, that a hot, tingling chill and a weird tremor swept over my entire being again and again and transported me with intoxicating delight. Great muscles, as frigid as if they were already of bronze, rounded out superbly on the man, as he held her tenderly to him, and yet with a clasp that a lion could not have broken. And she, ah, so daintily her hands locked around his neck, so confidingly her head rested upon him, so modestly her heart beat out the song of her soulful devotion! It was everything! Poetic, heroic, chaste, dignified! — the very essence and consummation of the exquisite in art!

I was still enraptured when the master's voice broke in upon my reverie.

"Now then, you, get around there lively."

And I did. If ever the devil of furious energy was in any one, it was in me that evening and night. Clay and clay I lay at his hand; plaster by the tubful I mixed and brought to him, and in a thousand lesser ways I helped that madman. Yes, mad; for with a desperation born of nothing else he drove at the task he had appointed. Now I knew what he had done before to the woman, and where his wonderful statue, instinct with life, came from; for he walled those two rigid lovers up in a plaster sheathing four inches thick.

Up, up and around them he builded the encasing stuff, while the pair, as if dead and solidified, moved no muscle. And I feared him for a very fiend and his work for horrible and gruesome magic, for no one had ever before cast from whole living models, and hell itself seemed to be in his method of doing it now.

The night waxed old, and yet we went at it with more zest than ever. Ghastly, incongruous images, like snow men out of drawing, the lovers became.

Long after midnight we toiled — and the thing was done, or, at least, the two were completely covered, and breathed only through tubes inserted in their nostrils.

Then, with delirious haste, but with a skill that was the acme of delicacy in its nicety, he began to take the mold apart, section by section, and lay the pieces carefully down. Like taking a rude shell from and uncovering a wondrous work in marble was this process, and as each piece came away, revealing more and more of the beauties of it all, my original thrills of ecstasy began again to creep adown and up my body.

All was off at last. And then, horror of horrors, his commands to them to release each other and to return to their dressing-rooms failed utterly to move them.

Locked in the poetic embrace, they stood like things of stone, and all his ravings — which his orders became immediately — failed to budge them the fraction of an inch.

What power he may have had before now vanished completely in his impotent rage. Exhausted, wild, frenzied,— aye, insane,

that this should come to pass,— he was beside himself in a panic of helpless fright, and he frothed at the mouth and digged at his face with his hands.

"My God! My God! What shall I do!" he shrieked. "They will come and find them here! The world will know! It will be murder! O mother of hell!"

In wild despair he sought again to undo the fearful spell he had wrought upon them. Vain the effort, vain the oaths, the writhings, the froth. Mad as a maniac, he unbolted the door and flew down the stairs and out; out into the air, and away, toward the river.

I, who had shrunk back, cowed and terrified, both at the hideous outcome of his devilish experiment and at the ravings of him, now slumped down on the clay tank, limp and undone.

There I sat still when the clock aroused my drowsing senses by striking the hour of three.

The sound had hardly died away when the two figures started convulsively. They released each other, all but one hand; this much they still held, as if in earnest of what had been.

In a bewildered way they opened their eyes and looked at each other. Then a cry escaped from his lips: —

"*My wife!*"

"You, Will!" she gasped, oddly. "You, and not dead? How — oh, what — Where are we? What does this mean? Oh, this is terrible!"

"My darling," he said, "what brings you here — this way? And what am I doing — oh, I can't remember."

Both reeled and passed their hands over troubled brows. Then she: —

"It is as if some witchery — something awful — had been on me."

"Oh, a hellish spell — a bad dream — a — "

He stopped, for he had now discovered me. Without waiting for him to ask, I stammered forth all I knew. I felt as if some weight had been removed from me, some gate opened inside. Eloquently I dilated, in my incoherent, juvenile way, on the wonderful power which the man had exercised over all of us. The whole story I told him, but not of the first work done upon his

wife — she who now shrank from sight, and covered herself with a curtain.

He comprehended clearly, saying almost nothing.

"And these are the pieces of the mold?" he asked, pointing.

"Yes."

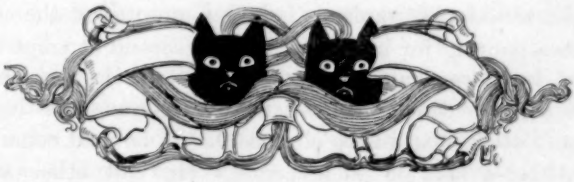
Taking a hammer that lay near, he calmly went to where the pieces lay — the pieces that held, in their entirety, the possibility of the greatest piece of casting ever conceived — and smashed them with the utmost deliberation, shattering the whole mass with a ruthlessness truly amazing to see.

Then, while I still grasped at my weakened heart, and yearned for rest and strength in my weary body, the two dressed and went away. Hand in hand they walked, avowing a new and potent bond of affection between them.

On the evening of that same day I read in the last edition of one of the city papers the following paragraph: —

"Just as the three o'clock boat at the Fourteenth Street ferry was leaving the dock this morning, a man, bareheaded, and apparently crazed, rushed to the edge of the wharf and threw himself into the water. Who the unfortunate person was will not be learned until the body is dredged up."

Well, the world knew of the mysterious suicide and who the "person" was, when the dredge fetched him up, stark and ghastly — his face a terrible mask of insane horror; and the world talked over the wonders of it quite sufficiently. But I alone knew what fear it was that drove to suicide the sculptor of The Polar Magnet.



Fitzhugh.

BY W. MACPHERSON WILTBANK.

YOUNG Fitzhugh was a man of his word; and now that he found the amateur circus was an assured thing,— in fact, was to come off within the week,— he determined to do his best for its success, according to his promise.

To be sure, if he chose to back down, it might well be said in his defense that the promise had been extracted from him under pressure; also, that when he had said he would lend a hand in any way the committee might see fit, the duty of impersonating a clown had not been presented to him as a possibility.

The committee had treated him shabbily, he felt. To run about a ring with a white face and a bald white head seemed almost indecent. To turn somersaults, perform tricks, and "in general" — in the language used in describing to him his duties — "to give the affair a dash and swing, and to fill up the necessary pauses in the performance with any tumbling and deviltry that his imagination might suggest," this he feared was beyond him. However, he would stick to his word.

There was some comfort in the fact that Cushing was to be the other clown. Cushing, by the way, was delighted with the prospect; he was something of an acrobat, and at the Athletic Club had been known to turn several hand-springs in succession. To be sure, he would afterwards sit for some minutes on the edge of the mattress, panting for breath, and at the second attempt rarely succeeded in more than two somersaults, the last ending usually on his back, — which was amateurish. However, as this was more than any other man in the club could do, he had come to regard himself as a sort of phenomenon. He had other accomplishments; he could balance a wand on the end of his nose, could keep a dull knife and two billiard balls in the air at once, and had

been known occasionally even to rise from a sitting posture to his feet, without interfering with his jugglery by losing more than one billiard ball, or possibly the knife.

For these reasons, and with the expectation of adding to his repertoire in the next few days, he was enabled to look forward to the night of performance with a pleasant confidence. Satisfied beyond doubt of completely extinguishing any attempts of Fitzhugh, indeed, of casting him quite into the shade, as the days went by he even became distressed for his chum, who appeared to be giving the matter absolutely no thought.

"Look here, Fitzhugh, my boy!" he had said, "you aren't a blooming genius. You can't expect inspiration on the moment. Here I've been working night and day, and, in spite of a natural gift for the thing, you know, I really doubt very much if, after all, I shall be extremely remarkable. Come," he cried, moved by a spirit of generosity and snatching up a knife, "let me show you how to cut yourself in two; immensely effective, I assure you."

But Fitzhugh had only yawned and said he guessed he'd go home to bed; and as he strolled away from the club, he left his friend shaking his head sadly, — the knife still in his hand.

It was after midnight when Fitzhugh reached his house on Marlborough Street, and let himself in with his latch-key. The servants were in bed, and he proceeded at once to his rooms on the second floor, looking about him expectantly. Yes, there they were, sent home that evening as he had directed,— a number of packages from the costumers, and in a corner, leaning against the wall, his wonderful new legs, finished just in time, as the performance was to come off the next night.

In fact, Fitzhugh had not been as idle as Cushing had thought. For the past week he had been shut up for hours each day in the workshop of a master carpenter, and at great expense had had these legs built.

He felt they were to be the novelty of the show.

They were undoubtedly curious affairs; a sort of stilt, to be strapped on the feet and legs, and on which, upon touching a spring, he would slowly mount into the air, his trousers keeping pace with his growth until he had reached an enormous elevation. Upon touching another spring these stilts would ap-

parently shrink, double up, as it were, upon themselves, his trousers falling in many folds about his feet, as he gradually resumed his natural height.

He considered that there would be something striking in this gradual stretching out of his person, and hoped that to do this at various intervals throughout the evening might perhaps compensate for his inefficiency in other respects. When he was not growing, he intended to sit quietly on the edge of the ring and watch Cushing make a fool of himself.

It was a warm night; Fitzhugh opened his windows and determined to have a dress rehearsal. He whitened his face, making his eyes and mouth look rather more ghastly than necessary, by the use of red paint; he then stretched over his hair a piece of white kid, which he plastered tightly across his forehead, and fastened at the back of his neck and above his ears. A pair of bushy white eyebrows, which he next put on, were extremely effective.

His clothes were all white, and consisted of a loose upper garment and a pair of baggy breeches, which, when he thrust his hands into the hip pockets and distended them laterally, attained an additional breadth that was amazing. He strapped the patent legs on first, and then put the baggy breeches over them.

These legs had broad wooden feet and were embellished with white kid slippers and pink rosettes. A tall white felt hat completed his equipment. Then, standing before a mirror, he touched the spring and watched.

His eyes naturally were fixed upon his limbs; these grew beautifully and were giving him exquisite satisfaction, when, happening to look up, he was horrified to observe that his head was nowhere to be seen, having passed above the level of the glass. In a second he felt the ceiling pressing his cap tightly over his eyes. There was not a moment to lose. With a quick movement he threw himself into a chair, and placing his legs on the window-sill, was gratified to observe the white kid slippers slowly disappear into the night.

Apparently at a distance of eight or ten feet they came to a stop. It was a close shave; his extremities shuddered for a moment, nervously, and one of the slippers was shaken off and fell into the yard below. This annoyed him.

He waited patiently for several minutes, but, observing no further change, he with some difficulty found the proper spring, and touching this, saw his feet gradually withdraw into the room until he was restored to a Christian length.

For some time he rested in his chair, puffing quietly at his pipe. Then he decided to go and hunt up the slipper. He groped his way clumsily downstairs and out into the yard, where the moon was shining brightly and the air was crisp and pleasant. It was a great relief from the hot room above, and he leaned easily against the house, chuckling as he thought of his startling reflection in the mirror, and of the prodigious effect he would create the next night. He smoked his pipe and meditated with satisfaction over Cushing's somersaults and jugglery.

Circuses, after all, weren't half bad.

Suddenly he heard a heavy footfall and the noise of a key thrust into a lock; the next moment the gate of the yard swung slowly open, and a man entered.

Fitzhugh was a man who thought quickly; he knew it must be the night watchman, an arrant old coward, and on the instant he decided upon his course of action.

Retreat was impossible; to explain his identity under such a disguise was not to be thought of. Besides, here was a dress rehearsal with a vengeance, an opportunity of putting his costume and legs to a most critical test. He determined to do them full justice.

The watchman slowly entered the yard, humming a tune and jingling his keys, after the habit of his race, as a warning to thieves to take themselves off and avoid a mutually unpleasant encounter. Fitzhugh crouched close against the wall and waited until the man was well within the yard; then, with a low, hollow sound, such as he fancied would be appropriate, he stepped into view, and, touching the spring, began slowly to mount towards heaven. It must have been a wonderful sight, this bald, white creature, with bushy white eyebrows and ghastly mouth (not to mention the huge white slippers and the pink rosettes), lit up by the moon's light, and slowly towering higher and higher into the air. When half way up he unexpectedly distended his breeches, upon which the watchman sank in a heap on the pavement.

So far all had gone well; his costume was a pronounced suc-

cess, and Fitzhugh should have been content to withdraw quietly indoors. It was very certain he would not be pursued. But unluckily his appetite was merely whetted, and shaking himself to make sure that the mechanism was intact, he proceeded to bear down upon the unfortunate man, working his mouth into the most dreadful contortions, and spreading his breeches until they looked like spinnakers on either side of an attenuated mast.

The outcome was disastrous. Flesh and blood could not stand such a sight. With a howl so blood-curdling and sustained that the whole neighborhood at once sat up in their beds, the watchman, now little better than a madman, discharged his revolver into the air, and rushed, howling, from the yard and down the alley.

Fitzhugh got back to his rooms with what speed he could, and rang for his man, who bandaged his arm, and unstrapped and washed him, and helped him to a sofa. The next morning he was ordered to bed by his doctor, and placed on hot water bottles and a diet of milk.

. . . . . .

It was nearly eight o'clock in the evening, and Fitzhugh lay stretched out in his bed, gazing critically at apparently the very same object that had had such a disastrous effect upon the watchman the night before, except that this object had attained his growth, and appeared to be pretty much of the height of Fitzhugh in a normal state.

"Yes, you'll do," said Fitzhugh slowly, and then continued with more animation: "Now mind your directions; the slightest slip, the mere opening of your mouth, might make a hash of the whole business. The show begins at eight o'clock. You are to drive to the hall in my brougham, which will await your return, and, as it is now just five minutes before the hour, you are sure to find the thing in full blast and the way clear by the time you arrive. You must leave in the same way, a little before the end, for the danger of a chance encounter with one of the performers, and especially with the other clown, is what is most to be dreaded. So much for that. As to what you do in the ring, I don't care much; turn a few somersaults,— by the way, do you juggle, play with billiard balls and knives and such things in the air?"

"Yes," said the man quietly.

"Ah! that's capital. Cushing will be charmed with you. I will leave the particulars to you, then. But remember, make your exit early; and drive back here, so that I may hear the news and pay you the money." The man made an odd, foreign bow, and left the room, and in a moment Fitzhugh heard the brougham drive rapidly away.

He leaned back on the pillows with a sigh of relief. His arm pained a good deal, for the watchman's bullet had made a nasty wound, over which at another time he would have growled savagely. As it was, however, he had given it little thought through the day, for he had been entirely absorbed in his plans for the evening. It was useless to notify the committee; to say that he was laid up, that, much to his disappointment, it would be impossible for him to take part in the show, and then upon inquiry to refuse to give any particulars as to the cause of his indisposition, would have been at once to pronounce himself a sham. His preparations for the affair had been so desultory that, as he well knew, his eagerness to participate could never stand such a test. Of course, to describe the episode with the watchman was impossible. No, there must be a substitute of his own getting, who must be palmed off as himself.

But whom to get! Savage knew everything. He called his man, told him what he wanted, and sent him off with directions to agree to any terms so long as he found a decent, respectable fellow who would not disgrace him. And the fellow was obtained as we have seen, and his name — though this Fitzhugh did not as yet know — appeared on the posters as "Mons. Callistrau," a gentleman who was at that time drawing an enormous salary at the Palace of Pleasure on Tremont Street, and was generally considered to be the most wonderful juggler and master of legerdemain that the world had ever seen. He had at first refused Savage's offers, but eventually agreed to a sufficiently enticing figure, and one that later made Fitzhugh feel as if he had been hiring an assassin, at the least. However, the man was conscientious, and went to the circus and excelled himself.

He reached the ring a little late. He was under the impression that the other clown at the time was standing calmly and un-

flinchingly on his head, — an addition to his repertoire; however, he soon forgot everything in the heat of his own performance.

On his entrance, he attracted to himself the attention of the house by turning a series of easy, graceful somersaults from one end of the ring to the other, ending at the very edge, with a low bow and a sweep of the hand. It was merely what one can see any time at the professional circus, yet such agility in Fitzhugh aroused much astonishment. There was loud applause and shouts of "Bravo! bravo! old man!" from his men friends in the audience. Cushing, as he saw Fitzhugh turning lightly over the bark like an animated cart wheel, had at once come to his feet and stood gaping with astonishment.

But Fitzhugh was evidently bent on work, and behaved like a man well accustomed to applause, treating it at times with scant notice, but occasionally acknowledging the appreciation of his audience by sweeping bows made to all corners of the hall.

It would be tedious, and indeed impossible, to describe his performances in detail. They were naturally of a marvelous skill, and in the course of half an hour he held the entire audience and all the performers spellbound. Cushing had long ago forgotten all about his cunning little tricks, and was seated on a heap of sawdust at one side of the ring, lost in astonishment and admiration.

Not for a moment did the performer appear to notice the effect he was producing; he was calm, unhesitating, and trick succeeded trick with scarcely a pause or intermission. Men and women shuddered as they watched him toss long, skewer-like knives into the air and keep them spinning round and round with the rapidity and symmetry of a revolving wheel. Men who had traveled and seen the exhibitions of the practised jugglers of the East told one another that never had they seen anything to equal this daring and demoniac skill.

It was nearly nine; the man was again playing with his knives, and was in the performance of a marvelously intricate feat, when a bunch of violets, thrown by some enthusiastic and excited woman, struck him full in the face; for the moment he was blinded and helpless, his hands groping at random in the air, and the knives falling about him in a shower; one scratched his hand, and another struck him fairly on the arm, burying its long, sharp

blade deep into the flesh. He uttered a cry, and drawing forth the knife threw it aside, and for a moment stood irresolute, the blood flowing freely from the wound. Then, snatching up the flowers, he bowed bravely, and turning, literally ran from the ring. The others followed, but he ran only the faster, on through a long corridor, past the officer at the door and out into the street, where he was seen to jump into Fitzhugh's carriage and drive away.

Fitzhugh learned little of the affair that night; the man, when he reached him, was weary and anxious to get away to his home; he described his wound as a scratch and stated briefly how it happened, and Fitzhugh paid him his money and let him go, making sure, first, that his identity had been in no way disclosed. He then slept happily through the night.

On the next morning, however, his trials began. By the first mail he was deluged with letters; letters from girls and from men, expressive of sympathy for his accident, and of unbounded praise; several boxes of flowers arrived through the day. The newspapers, too, were full of him, and one in particular fairly threw him into a fever; one in which for some reason he was portrayed in tights, with curly hair and firm countenance, knives flying about him, and one quivering in his arm. But it was not until several days later, when, with his arm in the sling, he went into his club for breakfast, that he realized the extent of his fame and the terrible nature of his punishment.

The men crowded round him as he entered the room, and stood about in a semicircle as he sat down to his eggs and coffee, praising, questioning, blaming him for his years of non-activity, anticipating other performances in the near future, until Cushing, who alone in a corner was earnestly endeavoring to perfect himself in a certain feat involving a carafe of water and several dinner plates, unwittingly created a diversion much longed for by his friend, by dropping everything upon the floor.

It was in vain Fitzhugh pooh-poohed the matter, and said that any of them could do as well with a little practise. They only called him modest, and this put him in a rage. As he walked home sadly, many heads were thrust out of carriage windows, nodding to him brightly; sometimes a neatly gloved hand was waved, or two, perhaps, were placed palm to palm in token of applause.

He was very unhappy; and when he reached his rooms and thought of the weeks that were before him, he made up his mind, in his usual impulsive way, to turn and run, to go abroad, and stay there until the affair was quite forgotten. Even this was a gloomy enough outlook, for he must go alone, of course. Any companion he might find among his friends would be sure to hang upon the old tale, in fact would, in all probability, some stormy night, introduce him in the saloon to the entire ship's company as a very possible source of entertainment, and with an elaborate description of his former success.

So, by the first ship, he sailed for Naples, without a good-by or a word to any one. That same evening at the club, a lot of men were seated about a table, smoking, when Cushing broke into the silence with a sudden inspiration.

"I have it," he cried; "you fellows are wondering why Fitzhugh has gone abroad. It's the simplest thing in the world. Don't you see, the man is just brimful of ambition, and I'll bet a fortune he has gone off to India to study some new tricks from those skinny beggars, — dervishes, you know. That's the trouble with this sleight-of-hand business," he went on, fingering nervously his cigar, a box of matches, and a small china ash receiver; "it grows on a man, becomes a sort of craving. If I had had half of his natural ability, if I was not quite such a clumsy brute (here the little ash receiver fell to the floor with a crash), why, hang me, if I would not have gone along with him myself."

The Passionate Snake.

BY ELLA HIGGINSON.

IF any man supposes that snakes do not understand the speech of human tongues, I — being a snake — will, in this short story, convince him that he is mistaken. I may convince him of some other truths, also.

We are the accursed of the earth. We have only to be seen to be straightway killed. Every man's hand is against us, not because of his own hate, for men are not cowards, but because of the hate of his women.

We have learned, therefore, through ages of cruel treachery, to make our blows swift and sure; yet I say to men, with scorn, that we are more honorable and more merciful than they: we give warning before we strike. We give each man one chance, at least, for his life. More, we strike only when our lives are threatened, or our privacy invaded.

I, being a female thing, have known love. Ay, most beautiful and graceful have I been from my birth. My form is slender and supple; my movements are sinuous and alluring. The grasses sway in languid undulations, caressing me, as I slide slowly through them. My markings are of rich and unusual beauty and brilliancy. It is said that my eyes take on the color of my moods and passions. When I lie basking in the sunlight, they have the pale blue content of the skies. When I lift myself erect, suspecting danger or treachery, they are like two glittering, green emeralds. When I am jealous — what female thing has not been? — they are a pale amber-yellow. *Once* it was said to me that they were — but that must wait.

But I am beautiful, so beautiful that other female snakes hate me. And I heard a man exclaim: "God, what a handsome thing!" one day, even as he lifted his heel to crush me. My beauty saved me, for, looking, he struck so reluctantly that I slid away and escaped.

I was born in a pile of stones on a hill in the lovely Grande Ronde Valley, in Oregon. From my father, a rattlesnake, I inherited my strong will and fierce passions; from my mother, a blue-racer, who had been lured away from her kin down in the green valley, my beauty and grace.

Before I was three months old I had tasted fame. All the male snakes on the hill came to watch me as I coiled and uncoiled my magnificent length over the stones of my home. And, oh, I used to wish that the mated ones would not come, for their mates said such evil things of me! But they would come.

One day in spring, when I was a year old, the king of all the rattlesnakes himself came to see my beauty, and he desired me greatly, although I was so young and he so old. My father was proud and flattered. But I — Well, there was a young and bold blue-racer who used to climb the hill from the valley; and on soft, moonless evenings, when my father slept and my mother pretended that she did not hear, I slid down and met him among the deep grasses that grew half way up the hill.

Ah, those hours of first love! Poor human things, who pass your nights within the four walls of a room, I pity you!

We were only snakes. But we had the night and all its sweets woven forever through our love. Soft winds, scented with the pines on the crest of the Blue Mountains, rippled the grasses above us, as we tasted the bliss of loving companionship. The nighthawk sank to blow his shrill bugle-note beside us; the stars glowed redly through the breathing dusk; from the cañons far up in the hills came the mournful cry of a coyote. Down under the velvet grasses it was dark and sweet, and we were alone, and we loved.

When at length I stole home and coiled myself on the smooth stones I could not sleep. I lay motionless until the pale greens and yellows came marching up the east, and the trees on the mountain's crest turned, one by one, to gold, and the meadow-larks sang, oh, so sweetly, in the valley where I knew *he* lay as motionless as I, dreaming of joys that had been and longing for those that were to be.

There was a full month of such bliss. But a day came when

my father knew; and that night the king of the rattlesnakes went down the hill in my stead, and lay in wait for his rival.

. . . . . .

When I was convinced that they had killed him, I stole away in the night and made my way to the other side of the valley, and dwelt alone on another hill, and mourned. There were no snakes and there were no human things. And, oh, the days were long, and, oh, the nights were lonely.

Deep and passionate was my grief through all the spring, and summer, and fall. When winter drew on, how glad was I to curl myself in a dark, warm place for my long sleep. I recall that my last thought was of how dreary and heart-breaking my awakening would be in the spring. Yet when the awakening came — well, I am a female thing, and that must be sufficient explanation.

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It was on a warm and lovely day in April that I languidly uncoiled and slid out to lie upon the stones. Never shall I forget how the beauty of that day thrilled me! I was glad, I exulted, only to live once more. My memories of love and sorrow seemed vague. Had I ever wished to die? Well, now I longed to live.

The valley stretched before my eyes, green and shining like a great emerald. There were splashes of yellow where the buttercups grew, and there were shooting-stars, and all the sweet winds of spring.

I remember my first glimpse of myself in a still pool that spring. You may have observed a woman, reft of her love, in your own life, you human things. You may have seen her tears, her anguish, her garb of woe. Then, when a few months have gone by, you must have one day had your eyes dazzled by her sudden blossoming out into a new and wonderful beauty. You must have marveled at the color in her cheeks, the brilliancy of her eyes, the warmth of her mouth, the subtle grace of her movements. So it was with me. Life throbbed once more through all my being.

The loneliness grew unbearable.

One day as I lay curled, half asleep, I heard a step. A moment later a man came close to my heap of stones. I sprang erect,

hissing and swelling, for I had not time to escape. He paused and looked at me.

"Beautiful thing!" he said, in a tone of sadness. "Strike, if you will. I shall not harm you."

He threw himself on the ground near me. He was unarmed. Ashamed, but incredulous, I dropped back into a coil, and lay watching him, motionless, save for the slow sliding of my head from side to side. He looked at me steadily.

"That a snake could be so beautiful!" he said, in the same sad tone. He reached out his hand with a caressing motion. "Come," he said, "we are alone. Let us be friends."

His eyes drew me with an irresistible fascination. A new, strange feeling stirred me. I uncoiled, and slid to him with graceful undulations. He laid his hand upon me, and both of us were without fear.

Days passed. I learned gradually that he had come there to forget a woman. He pitched a tent near the stones and dwelt there. I followed him everywhere. I never permitted him to get out of my sight. I slept at his feet, and with the first dawn-ray I found his hand and curled upon it, waiting patiently for his caress.

One night when the moon hung large and yellow on the violet breast of the sky, he threw himself upon his blankets, and held his hands out to me.

"I am sorrowful to-night, Lilith," he said — he called me that. "Come close, closer, my beautiful. Make me forget — other nights."

In that hour, as I slid into the warmth of his breast, I knew that sometime, somewhere, I had been a woman. Oh, the wild, sweet, passionate love that shook me! Oh, to utter but one word of it! Oh, to have hands to caress him, soft arms to enfold him, red lips to find his kisses! What had been my sin, then, when I was a woman, that I should have been re-created in this form? Beautiful, oh, beautiful! Yes; but unfitted for any save the lower loves, and this love was of the highest; the love of woman for man.

I shrank, quivering, from the memory of that other love. So must a woman shrink, loathing and shuddering, from the memory

of such a love when, through some great, exalting passion, a new and noble soul has been born in her.

Having no arms and no lips, I curled close, close, into his breast, and around his splendid throat I drew my throbbing coils. Then it was that he said, "Lilith, what eyes you have! They are like two little lamps of crimson fire, glowing in the dusk."

All that night, and many, many others, I slept there.

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In the gorgeous pomp of an August dawn the man awoke, with the snake twined about him. The woman he had been trying to forget stood beside him. He flung the snake from him and stretched out trembling arms to the woman.

"Dearest!" she cried. "Did you think I could bear it? *I* knew better. I have followed you, and I shall never leave you again!" She sank to him, sobbing, and laid her mouth upon his.

He put his arms around her and held her there silently.

Suddenly she screamed and sprang erect.

"A snake! Kill it! *Kill it!*"

It was coiled, hissing, to spring at her. Already his hand was on his revolver. There was a flash. The woman screamed again. The snake was dead. In a moment the man had flung it outside the tent, and caught her, sobbing and trembling, to his breast.

"O my dearest," he cried, "if the reptile had struck you, I should have turned the revolver on myself. O my beloved, this accursed time without you! Give me your arms, your lips. Let us make up for this awful time apart!"

Professor Whirlwind.

BY ALLEN QUINAN.

HE was a majestic, taciturn man, with a beardless, bloodless face, and a massive head, entirely bald except for a tuft of coal-black hair just above the nape of the neck. What his real name was I never knew, but, for reasons that will appear later, I always think of him as Professor Whirlwind.

Our acquaintance came about on board the ocean steamer *Teutonic*. For several days I had noticed this strange figure pacing up and down the deck, often casting swift glances seaward and muttering to himself. One morning, as I lay in my steamer chair watching this curious proceeding, I was astonished to see the Professor stop short, his head thrust forward and inclined to one side as if listening intently, while his gaze was riveted on a funnel-shaped cloud that had suddenly loomed up in the horizon.

For a moment he stood like this, as rigid as a statue, his eyes, ordinarily dull and filmy, flashing forth a lurid light. The next instant he threw up his hands convulsively, as if to shut out some dreadful vision, and tottered backward like a drunken man. Fearing an accident, I sprang to aid him. But by an effort he recovered himself, and, wheeling about, walked hastily away.

As he turned, something fell from his person and rolled swiftly across the deck. Another moment and the object would have disappeared into the sea, had I not caught it up out of harm's way. It was an oval case of gold, whose spring, broken by the jar, had started open, disclosing the miniature portrait of what seemed, in my momentary glimpse, a very young girl with the delicate beauty of a flower. Closing the case, with the feeling that I had involuntarily intruded upon another's private affairs, I hurried after the portrait's owner. I found him in his stateroom, his eyes carefully scanning the floor, apparently searching for the

miniature case, which I now produced. As he grasped it, with a sigh of relief, the spring once more started open, and, though this time I looked away, I felt that the Professor divined that its contents were known to me. At any rate, after a moment's hesitation, he began: —

"Very likely you were amazed at my actions on deck and think me a coward, if not a maniac. And then this picture — you must have wondered what relation could exist between that beautiful young girl and one like myself. But since you have seen — Well, do you care to hear a story, a true story, though one that staggers human belief?"

"Certainly," I said, "if you are sure that you care to confide in a stranger."

I had observed that while I was speaking, his eyes, instead of looking into mine, were fixed upon my mouth. It was not, however, till he touched his ear significantly that I knew he was deaf and could understand my speech only by watching my lips.

"Well," he continued, "I had two companions in my strange adventure; you have seen a portrait of one; let me show you a photograph of the other."

Rummaging in his trunk, he drew forth a photograph, cabinet size, of a very queer-looking biped, which, on a close inspection, I saw was a large rooster. The curious thing about it, however, was that the fowl had been photographed in what an artist's model, perhaps, would term "the altogether"; there was not a feather on it! And yet it seemed alive, and stood with its neck stretched forward, its bare wings partly raised, and its bill open, as if in the act of crowing lustily.

I laughed heartily.

"You would not have been so merry," the Professor said gravely, "if you had met him when I did. He was not then the swashbuckler that he appears in this photograph, which was taken a short while after the eventful day on which I fell in with him — the seventeenth day of June of the year eighteen hundred and eighty-two. Ah! what Iowan can forget *that* day?

"At that time I was living near Des Moines, and was deeply in love with the most beautiful girl that I have ever known, the original of the portrait that you found. Oh, you need not smile,

for I was then a good-looking, athletic fellow, of but twenty-five years. Well, for some reason my love-making didn't progress. Alice seemed to care for me, but her parents, though they showed no opposition, somehow always made it impossible for me to see her alone. It was as though they suspected my purpose and were determined that I should have no chance to speak to Alice of my real feelings.

"But I was as determined as they. So, when the professional aëronaut, Lugui — you remember the *furore* he created — came to town with his monster balloon, a scheme came into my head that I thought would enable me to be alone with Alice.

"Lugui had found it profitable to let the public take short rides in the air, the balloon being attached for this purpose by a rope several hundred feet long, to a windlass on the ground, worked by two strong men, who would allow the rope to unwind, and the daring passengers slowly to ascend.

"Now, my plan was simply to induce Alice to slip away and take a ride in the great air-ship with me, providing against the presence of other passengers by paying for the entire five seats."

"And the scheme succeeded?" I asked, as the Professor paused.

"Yes," he said gravely, "up to the moment when we began our ascent. But, just as the aëronaut's assistants had obeyed his signal, the balloon began to pitch like a ship in a storm, wrenched the handle of the windlass from the grasp of the men, and then — the earth bounded away in a succession of rapid leaps, like a jack-rabbit, and, before we could realize that the rope had snapped asunder like pack-thread, we were so far from land that the shouting of the excited multitude sounded to us like the slumbrous drone of insects.

"'Well,' I exclaimed, secretly glad that the parting of the rope had prolonged our companionship, 'this may prove a longer journey than we bargained for. Shall I pull the valve-line and descend? Not frightened, are you?'

"'No,' she answered, laughing; 'a little higher. This is glorious!'

"As for me, to be alone with her in these quiet regions was

heaven itself. Scarcely feeling the motion of our ship, up we glided through the blue silence till the earth, covered with a transparent mist like a veil of golden silk, began to assume a concave appearance; and, at last, our balloon, glowing like a golden planet, seemed to hang at the center of the visible universe. Below us lay the earth,—another sky,—its horizon looming up to meet the upper bowl of the heavens. Around us slept an ocean of blue, its serenity unbroken save towards the west, where masses of clouds softened the fierceness of the sun and threw a mellow radiance over all. Poised in mid-air, our balloon motionless except for a dreamy swaying to and fro, the deep silence unbroken save by the soft Æolian murmurs of the wind in the rigging, we dwelt in a world all our own. Hand clasped in hand, we gave ourselves up to blissful dreams.

"Suddenly there was a rush of warm air from below that sent our balloon careering through space. Dense mists gathered over the earth, and a shrill wind, tearing the mists into long streamers, drove them northward, where they banked themselves in a towering mass of gloom against the sky.

"Alice, overcome with terror, begged me to descend, but the valve-cord had become entangled with other parts of the rigging, and resisted all my efforts to let out the gas, which now swelled the balloon until it threatened to burst.

"I had read enough of the history of aëronautics to know that the explosion of a balloon in the upper air is not very dangerous, and tried to calm my dear girl's fears by explaining that in such cases the resistance of the atmosphere soon throws the envelope of the balloon into the form of a parachute, that breaks the force of the fall.

"But I was not given much time for theorizing. It had now grown so dark that we could scarcely see each other. As we cowered in the car, uncertain of what a second might bring forth, a ball of fire whizzed through the sooty darkness, illumining two peculiarly angry clouds that had made their appearance, one in the northwest and the other directly opposite in the southwest. Swaying and swelling for a moment, as if moved by the impulses of living beings, they rushed madly together and formed a single, olive-green, funnel-shaped cloud, that glowed in its upper part

with a weird light, and began to whirl and hum like some gigantic top. It was a tornado spout!

"At the same time the air around us was filled with so stifling a smell of sulphur that Alice fell fainting into my arms. Our quivering balloon again bounded upward, and there was a faint report like a distant pistol shot.

"I knew that the balloon had exploded, and braced my nerves for the terrible descent. Kneeling, I supported Alice with my left arm, and with my disengaged hand got a vice-like grip on the rim of the car. As we began to fall, the car swaying frightfully from side to side, I heard a hoarse, rumbling sound like that preceding an earthquake, and glanced westward. The tornado funnel, whirling round and round, and humming like a mill-wheel, casting an unearthly radiance far above it, zigzaging at times from side to side, and lashing its tail like some maddened leviathan, was rushing straight towards us! What occurred the next instant I heard rather than saw. A whir, as of mighty wings, a rattle, as of musketry, a bellowing, as of mad bulls, — and we dropped like a stone into the ghastly abyss.

"I hardly expect to convey any conception of my sensations. For the first second there was the sickening feeling that one has when dreaming of falling from a high cliff. But, instead of the awakening bump, I felt a galvanic-like shock, my hair and beard standing erect, a pricking as of needles over my face and neck, a painful light shooting through my eyeballs, and my whole body alternately tossing and stiffening, as if from strychnia poisoning.

"The next moment I was plunged into a delicious bath of cool vapor, the rapidity of the descent gradually lessening till at last the sense of falling ceased altogether, and the car began spinning in a jerky, pulsatory manner, but with incredible rapidity, round and round, as it appeared to me, in horizontal circles.

"All around me was a pitchy darkness, and from out that darkness came two sounds that God grant I may never hear again. One, a commingled roar and wail that seemed to burst upward from the bowels of the earth; the other, a continuous cutting, high-pitched, humming sound, for which earth affords no comparison, unless it were the noise that would be made by the simultaneous buzzing of innumerable circular saws. This humming,

never ceasing for a moment, and cutting through the fearful darkness, was inexpressibly horrible. Pitched high above the roar and wail that came from below, it jarred my very bones.

"To add to the horror of it all, Alice had slipped to the floor of the car, and my hands, feeling for her in the darkness, encountered a face cold as marble. As I strained my eyes to see her, a tiny shaft of light filtered down through the gloom above and fell upon her upturned face. It looked white as snow in the sickly ray. But her eyes were only partially closed, and for a moment my heart throbbed with joy as I fancied I could detect a tremulous movement of the blue-veined lids. Then the light went out like a snuffed candle, and left us again in the whirling, humming darkness. But only for an instant. Again it shone downward, and soon a dull, spectral glow lit up the gloom around us.

"What I now try to describe to you, I saw, of course, after my senses had somewhat recovered from their utter bewilderment. I found our car, on the rim of which the hoop had fallen with the wreck of rigging and silk still hanging to it, whirling, without visible means of support or propulsion, in the interior of an immense hollow, funnel-shaped cloud that was spinning round and round with such bewildering rapidity that I should not have known that it moved at all save for the fact that it revolved, not in a regular, continuous manner, like a top, but in a pulsatory, intermittent way, like the ratchet-wheel of a clock (except that the revolutions were from right to left), and caught up at intervals visible spirals of vapor that swirled from the central axis of the funnel and sometimes dashed over us in a fine spray.

"The upper portion of the funnel was filled, almost to the central axis, with a luminous mist, which was apparently in a state of rapid vibration, and through which could be dimly seen, floating on its upper surface, a phosphorescent disk of light, about the size of a dinner-plate, from which there radiated towards the outer wall of the funnel concentric rings of light that were continually shifting and wavering in their hues.

"Brain-sick as I was, from the incredible speed, and appalled by the deafening noises, I still had some confused idea that we were in a tornado cloud. But what supported us? The envelope of the balloon had long since been shredded by the fury of the blast.

"Glancing downward, I saw indistinctly numerous objects in the embrace of the whirl.

Once what looked like a large iron bridge was sucked up into the cloud for a short distance and, after floating for a few seconds, fell and disappeared. I believe I caught a glimpse of the earth as the lower part of the funnel ceased for a moment its furious lashings to and fro, and became partly cleared of the innumerable objects that were rushing pell-mell into its mouth.

"Suddenly the truth flashed upon me! It was the air itself that supported us! We were in the interior of an immense revolving flue, into which, as it traveled forward, powerful ascensional currents of air were indrawn at the earth below, and it was these upward spiral streams, howling and shrieking as they were sucked into the vortex, by which we were carried round and round like a leaf in a small dust storm. But, oh, with what fearful velocity! Looking back on that vertiginous flight, I can but smile at the calculations of meteorologists that in the most violent tornadoes the centripetal whirl of the wind has a velocity of eight hundred miles an hour!

"I now began to feel a singular buoyancy of spirits. I rapidly recalled miraculous escapes of persons struck by tornadoes, and recollected especially having read that, in the New Brunswick tornado of 1835, a lad had been carried upward and onward for a distance of a quarter of a mile, and afterwards deposited in safety. I remembered, too, that the spout which passed over Mount Carmel in 1877, and of which I myself had been an unwilling spectator, had carried bodily the spire of the Methodist church a distance of over fifteen miles. I was even seized by a transport of joy at the thought that I alone, of all men, had been permitted to ride on the very wings of the wind.

"But how soon that elation collapsed! Suddenly something whirling near us became entangled in the mass of cordage and silk hanging to the hoop. I got a grip on the thing and pulled it into the car. It was a rooster, entirely denuded of feathers, but still gasping with some sort of life! In spite of all, I could not help smiling at this unexpected visitor from the barnyard, and the picture of fear he presented as, with mouth agape, eyes protruding, and plumage gone, he lay quite still on the floor, occasionally sticking his head under his wing to shut out the horrid sights and sounds.

"A deathly chill crept over me. No mere wind, however violent, could divest a fowl of its feathers without killing it outright. But one agent in all nature could do it. I suddenly remembered my own sensations during the first sweep of my descent, and clapped my hands to my face and head; both were as free of hair as a new-born baby's! 'This rooster,' I then thought, 'has evidently been carried to the top of the funnel into that electric sea, which has stripped him of his plumage as it has me of my hair and beard. He has fallen again into the path of the tornado, and has been sucked up the second time into the vortex by the indrawn currents. *Is it possible for the same thing to happen to us?*'

"I now began rapidly to reflect upon what I had merely noticed before, that some of the objects that were sucked up would whirl past us and very suddenly shoot outwards through the walls of the funnel, while other and heavier objects would continue to circle below or sometimes fall back to earth. Plainly there was an altitude in the funnel where the ascending air-streams tended so strongly outwards from the center that the objects light enough to reach that altitude were hurled through the walls.

"We might ourselves reach that altitude, for the violence of the whirl was increasing, the humming noise growing shriller and shriller till it was elevated to the highest pitch of screaming. Suddenly something seemed to burst in my head — and all was silent. I looked up. The humming disk, the swirling spirals of vapor had not vanished, nor did it seem possible that such motion could exist apart from sound. There could be only one explanation. I had become wholly deaf!

"To add to the horror of the moment, I now discovered that our car was ascending. Instead of traveling horizontally in our circuits, it would shoot spirally upwards for a few feet, where it would make the circuit of the tunnel till another stronger current from below would whirl it up a few feet farther. Another moment and the funnel was lit up with an intense light. Again I glanced upwards. The disk that had hung at the top of the funnel was sinking towards us, and we were slowly rising to meet it!

"Like a bird before a basilisk, I gazed at the fiery disk.